United Nations A/C.1/55/PV.2

General Assembly
Fifty-fifth session

Official Records

First Committee
2nd meeting
Thursday, 14 September 2000, 3 p.m.
New York

Chairman: Mr. U Mya Than ..... (Myanmar)

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Statement by the Chairman

The Chairman: At the outset, I should like to extend a warm welcome to all delegations participating in the deliberations of the First Committee at the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly. I wish to take this opportunity to express my profound gratitude to all Member States for the privilege and honour they have bestowed upon me and my country by electing me Chairman of this important body of the General Assembly. I am greatly honoured and deeply indebted to all members for the trust and confidence they have placed in me.

Moreover, I wish to express, on behalf of all members of the Committee, as well as on my own behalf, our deep appreciation to Ambassador Raimundo González of Chile for the skilful and effective manner in which he conducted the proceedings of the First Committee last year, at the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly.

As I assume my duties as Chairman of this body, it is gratifying for me to know that I can count on the cooperation of all members of the Committee, as well as on the valuable experience and profound knowledge of the Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services, Mr. Jin Yongjian; the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Jayantha Dhanapala; and the Secretary of the First Committee, Mr. Lin Kuo-chung, and his colleagues in the Secretariat. I am sure that the Committee will benefit from their experience. We look forward to their support in dealing with the many complex issues facing us.

At this organizational meeting, the Committee will proceed to the election of officers of the Committee — namely, the Vice-Chairmen and the Rapporteur — as well as the adoption of the programme of work and timetable of the Committee for the current session. I should now like to take up the first item, namely, the election of the officers of the First Committee.

In that connection, I wish to inform the Committee that for the three posts of the vice-chairmanship, only two candidates have up to now been nominated, namely, Mr. Alberto Guani of Uruguay from the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States, and Ms. Petra Schneebauer of Austria from the Group of Western European and other States. We still lack candidates for one post of Vice-Chairman from the Group of African States and for the post of Rapporteur from the Group of Eastern European States.

If I hear no objection, I shall take it that, in accordance with rule 103 of the rules of procedure and established practice, the Committee wishes to dispense with the secret ballot and to declare Mr. Alberto Guani of Uruguay and Ms. Petra Schneebauer of Austria Vice-Chairpersons of the First Committee by acclamation.

It was so decided.

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

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The Chairman: I should like to express my warm congratulations to Mr. Guani and Ms. Schneebauer on their election as Vice-Chairpersons of the First Committee. I am sure that with their rich experience in the field of disarmament, they will be able to make a valuable contribution to the work of the Committee.

I would like to draw the attention of the members of the First Committee to rule 110 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, which specifically stipulates that congratulations to the officers of the Main Committee shall not be expressed except by the Chairman of the previous session — or, in his absence, by a member of his delegation. Accordingly, I shall now call upon the representative of Chile, who will speak on behalf of Ambassador González, the Chairman of the First Committee during the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly.

Mr. Coutts (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the delegation of Chile, I would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the chairmanship of the First Committee at the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly.

At the same time, I wish to congratulate the Vice-Chairpersons, Ms. Schneebauer and Mr. Guani. We are all convinced that, with their experience at the United Nations in the field of disarmament and international security, among their other well-known skills, they will contribute importantly to the successful work of our Committee.

I also wish to take this opportunity to thank yet again all delegations present here for their cooperation in advancing the work of the session that has just ended.

The Chairman: I call on the representative of Uruguay, Vice-Chairperson of the Committee.

Mr. Guani (Uruguay), Vice-Chairperson of the Committee (*spoke in Spanish*): We wish to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of your important task at this session. We are convinced that you, with your vast experience and the many years you have devoted to the Organization, will demonstrate your fitness to guide our work in the manner we all hope for. We also wish to thank Ambassador González of Chile for his dedicated work at the last session. We assure you, Sir, that we are entirely at your disposal in undertaking the work with which you entrust us. You will have our full cooperation.

The Chairman: I now give the floor to the representative of Austria, Vice-Chairman of the Committee.

Ms. Schneebauer (Austria), Vice-Chairperson of the Committee: I, too, would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your election and to thank your predecessor, Ambassador González of Chile, for the work he did last year.

Let me express my sincere gratitude for the First Committee's having proven its confidence in me by electing me as one of its Vice-Chairpersons. I feel very honoured and I hope that, with members' cooperation and support, I will be able to be a good servant to this Committee.

I am looking forward to working together with the Chairman, the other Vice-Chairperson, the Rapporteur, the very able staff of the Secretariat and especially with all the delegations.

The Chairman: The Committee has thus concluded its consideration of the election of its officers.

Organization of work

The Chairman: May I draw members' attention to document A/C.1/55/1, containing a letter dated 11 September 2000 from the President of the General Assembly, informing me that the General Assembly has decided to allocate agenda items 65 to 81 to the First Committee for its consideration.

Before proceeding to the proposed programme of work and timetable, as contained in document A/C.1/55/CRP.1, I wish to recall that, at the open-ended informal meeting of the First Committee held on 12 September 2000, the Committee tentatively agreed, albeit on an *ad referendum* basis, to its draft programme of work and timetable for this session. In this formal setting, allow me to make a few comments on this proposed document.

The programme of work and timetable which delegations have before them have been prepared taking into account a number of initiatives proposed over the past several years, including the Assembly's decision 52/416 B on the rationalization of the work of the Committee. According to these initiatives, as well

as established practice, the First Committee begins its substantive work immediately after the conclusion of the general debate in the plenary. For the current session, that should fall on 2 October as a result of my consultations among delegations during the past week. It appears that a majority of the delegations could agree on this date to begin the substantive work of the First Committee.

With regard to the closing date for the Committee's deliberations, it will be recalled that, under the same General Assembly decision, it was agreed that the First Committee would

> "make every effort to conduct and conclude its substantive work with the most efficient use of time in no less than thirty meetings and in a time-frame not exceeding five weeks". *(General Assembly decision 52/416 B, para. (a) (i))*

Moreover, the President of the General Assembly appealed to the Chairmen of the Main Committees to conclude the work of their Committees by mid-November in order to enable the plenary of the Assembly to consider the reports of the Main Committees during the latter part of that month.

Consequently, the First Committee will conclude its session on 3 November 2000, as set by the General Assembly. That allows us five weeks in which we will hold a total of 31 meetings. Let me express my belief that, with the cooperation and concerted efforts of the member States, the Committee will successfully and promptly accomplish its tasks within the number of meetings and the time-frame allocated to it.

Like last year, the First Committee will organize its work at this session in three phases, as reflected in the draft programme of work and timetable. The first stage will be devoted to the general debate on all disarmament and international security agenda items, namely, items 65 to 81, allocated to the First Committee. It will cover the period from 2 to 13 October, with a total of 11 meetings. In this regard, I should like to remind delegations that, as in previous years, statements should be limited, whenever possible, to 15 minutes in order to enable as many delegations as possible to participate in the general debate.

While I am on this subject, allow me to invite those delegations wishing to participate in the general debate kindly to inscribe their names on the list of speakers with the Secretariat. It should also be noted that the deadline for the closure of the list of speakers in the general debate on all items will be Monday, 2 October at 6 p.m.

The second stage will begin on 13 October and end on 23 October, with eight meetings set aside for thematic discussion on item subjects, as well as for the introduction and consideration of all draft resolutions submitted under agenda items 65 to 81. During this period, delegations may wish to introduce relevant draft resolutions and conduct consultations on those drafts.

Regarding the deadline for submission of draft resolutions, I should like to underline that, in order to facilitate the work of the Committee and give sufficient time to delegations for consultations, the Committee may wish to set Friday, 13 October, at 6 p.m., as the deadline, as agreed at the informal meeting on 12 September.

It is my intention to request the cooperation of delegations in adhering strictly to this deadline. I strongly encourage delegations to submit and introduce their draft resolutions as early as possible, especially traditional draft resolutions and those that will entail programme budget implications, in order to enable the Secretariat to prepare the necessary documents. This will also facilitate the work of the Committee in taking action on them and in meeting the mandatory deadline required for submission to the Fifth Committee.

Let me remind delegations that the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions and the Fifth Committee require time to review the programme budget implications of the draft resolutions before they can be acted upon by the Assembly.

The last stage of the Committee's work is action on all draft resolutions. As reflected in the programme of work, 11 meetings have been allocated for this purpose, from 25 October to 3 November, on which date the Committee will conclude its session.

With these brief remarks, I should like to propose to delegations the draft programme of work and timetable, as contained in document A/C.1/55/CRP.1. The draft programme of work and timetable, as delegations as aware, were considered and accepted by referendum at the informal meeting of the Committee held on Tuesday, 12 September. I hope that this draft programme of work and timetable, which were arrived

at after due consideration and following past precedent, meet with the Committee's approval.

If I hear no objection, I shall take it that the First Committee adopts the programme of work and timetable, as contained in document A/C.1/55/CRP.1.

It was so decided.

The Chairman: I should now like to draw the attention of the Committee to the relevant rules and recommendations of the General Assembly affecting the work of the Main Committees, including those contained in decision 34/401.

In order to fully utilize the time and conference services available to the Committee, I should like, with the cooperation and support of delegations, to convene the meetings of the Committee promptly at 10 a.m. and 3 p.m., respectively. Permit me to emphasize the utmost importance of punctuality in ensuring an effective and orderly organization of our work and achieving economy for our Organization. Punctuality is a virtue, and I trust that all representatives in this Committee, being virtuous persons, will be strictly punctual.

One more request, which is becoming quite traditional these days. Delegations are kindly requested to switch off their cellular phones during the proceedings of the Committee. I hope that this, too, will meet with the Committee's understanding and full support.

May I draw the attention of the Committee to the fact that I have been informed by the Secretariat that the Fifth Committee is seeking the views of the members of the First Committee with regard to the proposed medium-term plan 2002-2005 on programme 2 concerning disarmament. The First Committee has been requested to convey the views of its members to the Fifth Committee not later than 25 October 2000, so that the Fifth Committee may begin its consideration of this question in time.

In this connection, I should like to request the members of the Committee to look into the subject matter, namely the proposed medium-term plan 2002-2005, as contained in document A/55/16, part I, corrigenda 1 and 2, and part II, and also in document A/55/6.

I am sure that delegations will be interested to know when the inter-sessional consultations on small arms will be conducted during this session of the First Committee. A number of delegations have asked about this. I have carried out consultations with Ambassador Carlos Dos Santos of Mozambique, Chairman of the Preparatory Committee for the 2001 Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, and arrangements are being made to organize consultations on small arms.

The first meeting of the inter-sessional consultations on small arms will be held on 6 October in this room, in the afternoon, following the meeting of the First Committee.

I give the floor to the Secretary of the First Committee.

Mr. Lin Kuo-Chung (Secretary of the Committee): With regard to our organization of work, I wish to draw the attention of members of the Committee to the following points. First, for the current session, the General Assembly, upon the recommendation of the General Committee, has decided to depart once again from the rule that one quarter of the members must be present before a meeting of the Main Committee may be declared open for debate. The General Assembly made this recommendation on the understanding that such a departure from the rule did not involve any permanent change in the relevant provision of rule 108 [67] of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, pertaining to the opening of a meeting whereby a majority of members must be present for any decision to be taken.

Secondly, as indicated in the programme of work and the timetable contained in document A/C.1/55/CRP.1, the list of speakers for the general debate on all disarmament and related international security agenda items will be closed on Monday, 2 October, at 6 p.m. A number of delegations have already indicated their intention to participate in the general debate. In order to enable the First Committee to fully utilize the time and the conference facilities available to it, all those delegations wishing to participate in the general debate are kindly requested to inscribe their names on the list of speakers, which is with the Secretariat, at their earliest convenience.

For the benefit of Conference Services, delegations are requested to provide a minimum of 30 copies of all prepared statements to the Conference Officer. A total of 250 copies are required for general distribution.

Thirdly, I would like to appeal to the members of the Committee to submit draft resolutions as early as possible, especially those that may entail programme budget implications, in order to allow sufficient time for the preparation by the Secretariat of the estimated costs and for consideration by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions and the Fifth Committee of the General Assembly. Moreover, I wish to emphasize that draft resolutions, amendments and the names of sponsors thereof should be submitted to the Secretariat in writing to ensure accuracy and avoid any possible misunderstandings.

Fourthly, I understand that various regional and political groups may wish to hold consultation meetings during the session. In this regard, requests for use of a conference room for group meetings should also be submitted to the Secretariat in writing as early as possible so that the necessary arrangements can be made in time.

Fifthly, I should also like to draw the attention of the members of the Committee to General Assembly decision 34/401, particularly to its provisions dealing with explanations of vote and the exercise of the right of reply, namely, paragraphs 6, 7 and 8.

Sixthly, as to documentation for the First Committee, information document A/C.1/55/INF.1 will be issued at a later date. This document will list, for the purpose of providing information and acting as a ready reference, all documents before the First Committee issued as of 29 September 2000. That list will be updated as appropriate.

Finally, I would like to ask delegations to kindly submit the list of membership of their delegations to the Secretariat as soon as possible so that the list of membership of the First Committee can be circulated at the earliest possible time.

The Chairman: Does any delegation wish to make further comments or remarks at this stage?

Mr. Anderson (United Kingdom): I spoke briefly during the informal meeting to congratulate you, Mr. Chairman. I should now like, on behalf of my delegation, to formally congratulate you, and the Vice-Chairmen, the representatives of Austria and of Uruguay.

On Tuesday, I asked about the meetings on small arms, and I see that the Ambassador of Mozambique — the Chairman of the Preparatory Committee — is about to speak, and may answer my question. You, Sir, have said that, potentially, you will reserve the afternoon of Friday 6 October for that meeting, which would take place following the end of the work of the First Committee. This seems to me to be a sensible idea. But I wonder whether, given the uncertainty of when the First Committee meeting might end, it would be sensible for us to set a time at which those consultations could take place, so that delegations can be clear about exactly what is going to happen on that afternoon.

The Chairman: In responding to the question raised by the representative of the United Kingdom, I should like to inform the Committee, that, as I mentioned earlier on, the first consultation meeting on small arms will be held on 6 October, in the afternoon, in this room, following the meeting of the First Committee. The afternoon meeting of the First Committee on 6 October will be a short one; I think that it will take only about one hour. So we can say that the consultation meeting will commence at approximately 4 p.m. That will, I think, leave enough time for the consultations.

Mr. Santos (Mozambique): I want to start by congratulating you, Sir, and the other members of the Bureau, upon your election, and to say that we look forward to working and collaborating with you in every way that we can for the success of our work. I asked to speak just so that I could express my appreciation for your understanding in allocating time for the inter-sessional consultations on small arms. All members of the Committee are interested in continuing the discussions on this item and are looking forward to participating. You, Sir, have also agreed that if we need to continue the consultations, you would consider allocating more time on other days for such consultations. I think that the item is important enough to warrant such attention, and I sincerely appreciate this time. I look forward to working with you on these and other issues before the Committee.

The Chairman: If no other delegation wishes to take the floor, I propose to adjourn the meeting.

The Committee will begin its substantive work on Monday, 2 October 2000, at 10 a.m.

The meeting rose at 3.50 p.m.